

Southern Nevada District Office
District Manager's Report
Mojave-Southern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council
April 2015

Las Vegas and Pahrump Field Offices Draft Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement: The Notice of Availability (NOA) for the Draft Resource Management Plan (RMP)/Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was published in the Federal Register on October 10, 2014, which started the public comment period. The comment period closed on March 9, 2015. Four public meetings were held during the public comment period to provide information regarding the Draft RMP/EIS and allow the public an opportunity to provide comments. SNDO has begun the process of organizing, reviewing, and responding to the cooperating agency and public comments for the Draft RMP/EIS. SNDO anticipates publishing a NOA for the Proposed RMP/Final EIS by early 2016.

Three CAPEs Award goes to SNDO: The Wilderness Society recently awarded SNDO a prestigious Comparative Analysis of Particular Excellence (CAPE) award. CAPE awards range from one CAPE at the low-end (according to them “worth a pat on the back”) to five CAPEs (according to them “HUGE PROGRESS!!! WAY TO GO!!!”). SNDO received the three CAPE award for Implementation Underway for BLM’s Solar Energy Program. Specifically “The Las Vegas-Pahrump Draft RMP took a fine-tooth comb to variance lands in the Southern Nevada District, further reducing lands that will be available to variance applications. The range of alternatives excluded more than 2 million acres of sensitive lands from solar energy development, using the land use planning process to guide solar energy to the right places on a more detailed level than the Solar PEIS.”

SNDO Participates in Barlow Fishing Derby: On November 8, City of Las Vegas Councilman Ricki Barlow held his second annual Fishing Derby at Lorenzi Park and geared towards school-age youth and their mentors. With over 60 attendees stopping by the booth, this was a great opportunity to reach out to the youth of Las Vegas and get them excited about our public lands.

Fire and Aviation

Prescribed Fire in Pine Creek: A prescribed fire was conducted February 10 in the Pine Creek drainage at Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area. The prescribed fire was the final phase of a fuel reduction project to protect a unique ponderosa pine stand from wildland fire by reducing fuel build-up in the understory.

SNDO Hosts Fire Investigator Course: In February, 22 students attended FI-210 Fire Investigation Origin Cause and Determination course. The highlight of the course was the field portion which provided a great opportunity to see live fire and how it behaves. In addition, students learned to read various indicators in order to determine fire origin and cause. The course used the Pine Creek prescribed fire project area within Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area. Attendees included representatives from Southern Nevada District Office, Winnemucca District Office, Carson City District Office, Elko District Office, U.S. Forest Service Spring Mountains National Recreation Area and Clark County Fire Department.

SNDO Fire Employee of the Year: Kevin Moss was selected as the 2014 Southern Nevada District Office Fire Employee of the Year. This is a peer-determined honor highlights an individual who goes above and beyond in supporting our program. Kevin is currently a Senior Firefighter on one of our Type 3 fire engines.

SNDO Spearheads Weed Management Efforts: About a year ago, Southern Nevada District Office became a founding member of the first Cooperative Weed Management Area that covers all of Southern Nevada. The group now consists of more than 25 different organizations, agencies, companies, private landowners and interest groups to work on weed issues across land jurisdiction boundaries and to pool resources for tackling these landscape-scale problems. The pilot project for the group was the fountaingrass initiative. Grant funding from the National Wildlife Federation was used to grow native plants for an exchange incentive to those who remove fountaingrass from landscaping. Harrah's Laughlin was the first large company to participate in the exchange. After they removed all of the fountaingrass on the property, they received 150 native Alkali Sacaton plants to replace the removed noxious weeds. Building on the success of the Harrah's Laughlin exchange, the first big volunteer day was held on March 7 at the Big Bend of the Colorado State Park in Laughlin. About 45 volunteers from Harrah's, Boy Scouts, the local high school as well as other individuals came out to remove fountaingrass invading the shorelines.

Law Enforcement

Shooting Site Gets A Touch Up: On November 8, the Las Vegas Field Office hosted 51 volunteers to remove accumulated trash at the popular Sloan gravel pit shooting area. The clean-up project was a local Boy Scout's service project to help him achieve an Eagle Scout status. Over 70 cubic yards of trash was removed and signs were posted to deter new trash from accumulating.

SNDO Teams Up to Keep Clean-Up Season Going Strong: Four divisions of SNDO came together on October 29 and 30 to clean six public land parcels in the Las Vegas Valley. Staff from law enforcement, maintenance, off-season fire fighters and the desert clean-up program joined forces and removed over 70 cubic yards of trash including couches, mattresses, and illegal encampments that were creating public health and safety problems.

Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act

Public Comment Sought on Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument Proposed

Funding: BLM accepted public comment on the Special Account Request (SAR) for funding from the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA) for Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument from March 18 through April 2. National Park Service requested initial funding generated from the sale of public land in the Las Vegas Valley for the newly designated monument in the northern portion of the Las Vegas Valley. Until the National Park Service is able to secure funding through the regular federal appropriations cycle, they requested \$327,234 to fund signage for the monument, educational kiosks and brochures, fencing, and supplies. They also requested funding for two temporary positions to provide outreach to visitors, to protect the paleontological and natural resources, to coordinate with volunteers to lead tours of the site, to help protect resources, and to clean up areas where litter and trash permeate the landscape.

SNPLMA Funded Park Opens to Rave Reviews: On October 24, BLM joined about 100 people at the grand opening for Mountain's Edge Regional Park. Phase I – named Mighty Mountain Fitness Area - provided development of 18 acres of the 220-acre park located in the southwestern part of the Las Vegas Valley and was funded by SNPLMA. The park was planned with significant input from area residents, who wanted its design to be fitness oriented. As a result, the park has several unique features including a lighted sports wall for racquet sports, soccer and other games and a bike town area complete with miniature stop signs and crosswalks designed to teach young children how to safely ride bicycles and scooters. In addition, it included a paved and dirt two-mile loop trail with shaded rest nodes, restroom, shaded children's play equipment area, park amusement entrance area, shaded group and individual picnic areas, amphitheater, lighted open grass play area, adult fitness area and meditation walk and interpretive trail.

SNPLMA Celebrated Sweet 16: October 19 marked the 16th anniversary of the passage of the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA.) SNPLMA allows the BLM to sell public land within a specific boundary within the Las Vegas Valley. The revenue derived from land sales is split between the State of Nevada General Education Fund, the Southern Nevada Water Authority and a special account available to the Secretary of the Interior for: Parks, Trails, and Natural Areas; Capital Improvements; Conservation Initiatives; Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP); Environmentally Sensitive Land Acquisitions; Hazardous Fuels Reduction and Wildfire Prevention; and Eastern Nevada Landscape Restoration Project. To date, SNPLMA has sold or conveyed 28,057.14 acres and generated over \$3 billion.

Affordable Housing in Las Vegas: On December 8, BLM received the full purchase price of \$90,000 (a 95% discounted sale price of the appraised fair market value of \$1.8 million) for the five-acre SNPLMA Affordable Housing project, "Agate Phase 2" sale parcel (N-92955). Upon receipt of the purchase price funds, BLM delivered the Agate Phase 2 land sale patent to complete the conveyance. The State of Nevada Housing Division (Patentee) recorded the patent on December 9. The Agate Phase 2 project began with a direct land sale application received in spring 2014, by the BLM from the Housing Division. The application was for the conveyance of a five-acre public land parcel for the development of a newly constructed 188-unit rental affordable housing complex for seniors and seniors with special needs, with at least 10% of the units having a preference for qualifying veteran households. The Housing Division was under pressure for this land conveyance to be completed prior to the end of calendar year 2014, or risk the loss over \$22 million in public and private funds. The BLM was supportive in expediting the land conveyance processing timeframe as requested by the Housing Division. With the help and support of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD); the Office of the Regional Solicitor; the Department of the Interior, Office of Valuation Services (OVS); and the BLM Washington Office (WO), Nevada State Office (NSO), and the Southern Nevada District Office (SNDO), we were successful in finishing the conveyance earlier than the target completion date.

Las Vegas Field Office

Sand and Gravel Sale Generates More Than \$10.7 Million: In March, BLM sold contracts for the extraction of 9.6 million tons of sand and gravel from the Lone Mountain Community pit. Mineral materials (sand and gravel) are used in everyday construction, agriculture, and decorative applications. Highways, bridges, power plants, dams, high-rise buildings, railroad beds and airport runways, along with their foundations and sidewalks, all use mineral materials of one type or another. LVFO manages the largest BLM mineral materials program in the nation featuring seven active community pits and dozens of individual use areas that produce several million tons of sand and gravel per year.

Nevada 150: Re-enactment of the Helen J. Stewart Land Deed: LVFO helped to commemorate the historic signing of a deed that transferred 10 acres of land to the Southern Paiute at an event in October. Helen J. Stewart deeded 10 acres of her land to the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs as a set aside for the local indigenous people. Paiutes displaced from traditional lands needed a place to live in Las Vegas where they could find work and services. In 1911, the Bureau of Indian Affairs acquired 10 acres for \$500 from Helen J. Stewart. The parcel, located in downtown Las Vegas, created a small reservation called the Las Vegas Paiute Colony. An Indian school opened here in the fall of 1912 and living conditions later improved when homes, paved streets, and pipeline connections to city water were constructed. Today, the Tribal Council has its offices here and operates the Smoke Shop. Tribal members share in the profits. The deeded land improved the lives of the Southern Paiute people and paved the way for the federal government to formally recognize the Las Vegas Paiute tribe as a sovereign nation.

LVFO Creates Restoration Win-Win Through Outreach: In November, LVFO wowed a crowd of 130 master gardeners. The presentation focused on SNDO's ecological restoration program including the scientific basis of ecological restoration and the scientific approach BLM takes to restore degraded areas of the Mojave Desert. Wanting to be a part of the solution, master gardeners expressed an interest in volunteering for seed collection projects. Capitalizing on variable, ephemeral seed production has been a major stumbling block for the restoration program. The culmination of this year-long partnership building effort resulted in many high-quality volunteers and a great conduit for sharing our story with the community.

LVFO Biologist Wins National Award: Mark Slaughter, Las Vegas Field Office Supervisory Natural Resources Specialist, recently received the 2015 Jim Yoakum Emerging Professional award, which recognizes outstanding individuals whose leadership, projects, or programs have advanced the goals of improving or conserving wildlife and fisheries resources.

Pahrump Field Office

Wild Burros Successfully Adopted: BLM sponsored a burro adoption event in January where 12 burros were successfully adopted. The BLM collected these burros in the Pahrump Valley community near the Johnnie Herd Management Area. The burros were gathered because they posed a safety hazard along State Route 160, side roads in the Pahrump Valley and have caused private property damage in the valley.

Tour of Southern Nye County: In September, PFO staff met with DOE officials to discuss mutual access, security, compliance and reclamation matters at the Nevada National Security Site, which lies on BLM withdrawn lands in southeastern Nye County. PFO works with a variety of agencies and military commands in overlapping jurisdictions of the Security Site, the Nevada Test and Training Range, two National Wildlife Refuges and the Nevada Wild Horse Range. During the trip, BLM conducted compliance inspections on various communication sites, mineral material pits and other rights-of-way.

Best Mascots Ever Promote Wild Horses and Burros: In January, SNDO celebrated a great Saturday at the Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area Visitor Center. Thanks to our three volunteers, two interpretive folks and the best mascots in Southern Nevada, we were able to reach out and educate approximately 236 people. The mascots: Jackson -- the burro -- adopted by Blaine Benedict, Executive Director of Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area and Carson Blue -- the horse -- adopted by Back Country Horseman Keith Wheeler help educate the public about the BLM's Wild Horse and Burro Program. People are staying longer and asking more in-depth questions about the management of the wild horses and burros. This is a great venue to reach people and it has helped cut down on some of the issues we have with people feeding the burros further down State Route 159. This weekend also gave us an opportunity to advertise our upcoming burro adoption and showcase just how friendly and tame these animals can be with the right training and time.

Grapevine Springs Restoration Project: Grapevine Springs are currently under restoration progress thanks to the efforts from the Pahrump Field Office, and funding assistance and workforce from the Las Vegas Field Office and Southern Nevada District Office. Grapevine Springs is a concentration of several isolated springs located in northeastern Pahrump Valley on the west side of the Spring Mountains in Nye County and is the largest spring concentration in this part of the Pahrump Valley. This is a newly purchased property with associated water rights acquired through Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act funding. The restoration project was needed to restore the springs back to functioning condition that are currently functioning at risk, and protect the endemic Southeast Nevada springsnail (*Pyrgulopsis turbatrix*) from threats caused by trampling and grazing and reduced water quality. Grapevine Springs are a major water source located in the Johnnie Herd Management Area.

Red Rock/Sloan Field Office

Fee Free Days: Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area, in conjunction with other agencies within the Department of the Interior, waived amenity-related fees on January 19 (Martin Luther King Jr. Day) and February 14-16 (President's Day Weekend). Remaining fee-free days this year are September 26 (National Public Lands Day) and November 11 (Veterans Day.)

Red Rock Visitation Soars: Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area usually is visited by a little more than one million people a year. 2015 has been a banner year so far and is set to break records. In January and February alone, Red Rock has had 90,000 more visitors than the year before.

Low Water Bridge Construction and Parking Lot Improvements to Commence at Red Rock: Construction started on two low water bridge crossings and repaving the visitor center parking lots at the Red Rock National Conservation Area in January. Red Rock/Sloan Field Office and the Central Federal Lands Division of the Federal Highway Administration expect that project construction will be completed in 10 months. The new bridges at the Sandstone and Red Rock washes will replace the existing at-grade road alignments on the 13-Mile Scenic Drive. This will greatly improve visitor safety during flash floods in both areas and improve traffic flow by reducing the frequency of closing the scenic drive during rain or storm events. The parking lots at the visitor center will also be paved and improved as part of the project.

Red Rock Hosts 98 Newly Naturalized Citizens: As they basked in the glory of the scenic Calico Hills, 98 individuals from 37 countries realized the American Dream when they became citizens at Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area on March 14. The new citizens hailed from the following countries: Argentina, Belize, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, France, India, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jamaica, Japan, Kuwait, Laos, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Nigeria, People's Republic of China, Philippines, Poland, Romania, Russia, Somalia, South Korea, Spain, Tonga, Tunisia, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Vietnam, and Yugoslavia.

Free Tours of Walking Box Ranch Offered: BLM provided free guided tours of the historic Walking Box Ranch, former home of silent movie stars Clara Bow and Rex Bell. Reservations quickly filled up for tours of the ranch, located on 160 acres seven miles west of Searchlight. BLM purchased the ranch and surrounding ranch site in 2005 using funds from the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA.) SNPLMA is also funding the restoration activities which include restoration of the ranch house, stabilization of other structures and infrastructure to support a museum.

Red Rock Canyon to Host Second Season of Artist Residencies: This year's first resident artist is Susan Thiele, who will be spending March 20 through April 10 working at Red Rock. An avid Plein Air painter and signature member of the New Mexico Watercolor Society, Thiele has traveled the world as a wilderness and international trekking guide specializing in the remote outposts of Asia. Michael Futreal is travelling from Louisiana for his residency, which will last from March 22 through April 6. Specializing in handmade instruments and musical improvisations, Futreal will be the first resident artist to explore Red Rock through sound and music. Sean Russel will complete his residency from April 5 through April 25. A local artist and teacher at the College of Southern Nevada, Russel has explored a variety of artistic mediums, from large scale, aggressive oil paintings to cast lead sculptures and an assortment of public artworks around Las Vegas. During their time at Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area, the selected artists will lead a number of community engagement projects, and participate in an exhibition at the visitor center this August and September.

Red Rock Hosts Make A Difference Day: In October, 17 volunteers and staff joined the nation's largest day of volunteering – Make A Difference Day – to give back to one of the most serene areas in Southern Nevada, Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area. Volunteers assisted BLM, Friends of Red Rock Canyon and Red Rock Canyon Interpretive Association with a desert cleanup that removed 28 cubic yards of debris from one mile west of the junction at State Route 160 and State Route 159. Volunteers and staff also installed a large “no shooting sign” that is visible from State Route 160.